

Slaughter Writes Letter on BRAC to Homeland Security Secretary

Department of Defense Must Consult Department of Homeland Security According to Official BRAC Criteria □

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, recently wrote a letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff to ask if the Department of Defense consulted with the Department of Homeland Security during the BRAC process.

Several BRAC Commissioners have suggested that the DoD may not have properly consulted with the DHS during the BRAC process, even in situations that officially necessitated a review of homeland security operations. Rep. Slaughter believes that Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS) could be one of the bases wrongly overlooked by this process.

Rep. Slaughter has long fought to see that NFARS is removed from the BRAC list of closures. One point she has continually stressed is the homeland security value of the base and its proximity to the northern border.

"Closing NFARS would severely damage DHS' ability to protect the northern border," Rep. Slaughter wrote in the letter. **"Accordingly, I would like to know whether or not DoD consulted with DHS when deciding to close NFARS."**

She added, **"Given that the BRAC Commission must report to the President no later than September 8, I ask that you provide me with this information as soon as possible."**

Rep. Slaughter's Letter:

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff,

Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

I am writing to learn the extent to which the Department of Defense (DoD) consulted with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) during the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

The BRAC Commission is required to assess each recommendation to ensure it meets the eight selection criteria set forth by Congress in P.L. 108-375. Criteria two, dealing with an installation's military value, reads: "The availability and condition of land, facilities, and associated airspace (including training areas suitable for maneuver by ground, naval, or air forces throughout a diversity of climate and terrain areas and staging areas for the use of the Armed Forces in homeland defense missions) at both existing and potential receiving locations.

According to Members of the BRAC Commission, for a military installation to meet this criterion, its homeland security operations must be evaluated. However, several Commissioners have suggested that DoD did not consult with DHS during the BRAC process. If this is true, then the DoD's BRAC recommendations are based on incomplete information,

and do not meet the statutory requirements.

For example, the DoD has recommended closing the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station despite its strategic location to the northern border and critical support of homeland security operations. As you are aware, a number of security agencies train and house equipment at the base, including the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. The installation has also supported the deployment of Army Guard helicopters assigned to the U.S. border. NFARS is the only staging area for homeland defense and disaster response in Western New York, and was instrumental in responding to the 9/11 attacks. The 107th Air Guard was the first Refueling Wing to fly Combat Air patrols over New York City.

Closing NFARS would severely damage DHS' ability to protect the northern border. Accordingly, I would like to know whether or not DoD consulted with DHS when deciding to close NFARS. Given that the BRAC Commission must report to the President no later than September 8, I ask that you provide me with this information as soon as possible. Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

/s

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress